

TASS: ITS ROLE, STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

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TASS: ITS ROLE, STRUCTURE AND OPERATIONS

I. TASS in the Soviet Monolith

A. History

Since the inception of the Soviet state the Communists have demonstrated a keen awareness of the value of properly handled propaganda and the need to control the press and all sources of information. A major element of the vast propaganda and control mechanism is the Telegraphic Agency of the Soviet Union (Telegrafnoye Agentstvo Sovetskago Soyuz - TASS).

As early as 1 December 1917 a decree signed by Lenin designated the already existing Petrograd Telegraph Agency (PTA) as an official news agency attached to the Council of People's Commissars (now the Council of Ministers). Four months later, on 7 April 1918, another decree merged the Press Bureau of the All-Russian Central Executive Committee with the PTA to form the Russian Telegraph Agency (Rossiyskoye Telegrafnoye Agentstvo - ROSTA).

The present TASS organization was established on 10 July 1925 by a joint decree of the Central Executive Committee and the Council of People's Commissars. A subsequent joint decree of 15 January 1935 superseded both the basic decree of July 1925 and later modifying amendments and constitutes the charter under which TASS, insofar as is known, still operates.

Upon the establishment of TASS, ROSTA continued to exist as the national telegraph agency for the RSFSR. However, following the 1935 decree, ROSTA was liquidated and TASS has continued to function not only as the All-Union agency but also as the national agency of the RSFSR.

B. Role

The 1935 decree describes TASS as the "central information organ of the USSR"; while the Large Soviet Encyclopedia terms it the "basic source of information of the Soviet press

on the political, economic and cultural life of the USSR and abroad." TASS thus has the dual function of operating both domestically and abroad. TASS is specifically charged with the gathering and dissemination at home and abroad of all types of news relating both to the Soviet Union and its constituent republics and to foreign countries.

Although the 1935 charter gives TASS a monopoly in these fields, this monopoly is somewhat qualified in practice. Abroad it shares news collection with a limited number of correspondents representing major Moscow newspapers (Pravda, Izvestia, Trud and Komsomol'skaya Pravda), and news dissemination with several Sovinform (Soviet Information Bureau) offices as well as reports sent abroad by foreign correspondents stationed in the Soviet Union. Within the Soviet Union the TASS monopoly is infringed by activities of the Administration for Radio News in the Ministry of Culture and the Soviet Information Bureau.

Juridically TASS is a state-owned enterprise, attached directly to the Council of Ministers. Its status as an official arm of the Soviet Government is manifested by the fact that whenever TASS correspondents abroad have gotten into trouble, the local Soviet diplomatic mission has appeared to claim diplomatic immunity for TASS and its employees. Although foreign states have not always accepted this claim, the British Court of Appeals, in its June 1949 decision in the Grajana libel case brought against TASS, ruled in favor of the defendant on the grounds that TASS is indeed an agency of the Soviet Government and, as such, entitled to immunity. The Court indicated that its decision was based primarily upon the certification of the Soviet Ambassador that

"The Telegraph Agency of the USSR, commonly known as TASS, or the TASS Agency, constitutes a department of the Soviet State, i.e., the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, exercising the rights of a legal entity."

Although TASS claims to be a news agency similar to UP, AP, Reuters, etc., it is not a bona fide news agency in the accepted Western sense. For while it performs

conventional news-gathering and distributing functions, it also acts to further the political objectives of the Soviet state. In effect, it is an official spokesman of the Soviet Government--official in the sense of being an authentic voice of the government, but unofficial in the sense of having only limited responsibility for the truth and consequences of its statements.

It may also be noted that within the Soviet Union, TASS is, as its name suggests, essentially a telegraphic rather than a news agency. It has very limited editorial functions and, to a large extent, is concerned merely with transmitting material selected by other organizations. Hence the phrase "TASS Report" in no way means that the agency itself has necessarily prepared the material transmitted. The actual originator may be anyone of a number of offices--Glavlit, Press Department of the Central Committee, Foreign Ministry Press Office, etc.

C. Relationship to Other Organizations

Although the 1935 decree provides that TASS is directly subordinated to the Council of Ministers, the nature of the Soviet state makes it inevitable that there should be a close Party supervision over its operations. It is believed likely that the Council of Ministers concerns itself principally with the managerial aspects of TASS (financial solvency, communication problems, etc.), while actual policy control rests in the Agitation and Propaganda Section [Agitprop] of the Party Control Committee.

As a Party rather than a government organ, Agitprop for the most part does not engage itself in propaganda operations but functions as a planner, guide, supervisor and policeman over all appropriate government agencies, including TASS. With responsibility for propaganda policies and decisions and for disseminating Party policy throughout the USSR, Agitprop is believed to have the task of determining how TASS reports should be edited to make them ideologically correct.

Another agency which appears to exercise some measure of control over TASS is the Soviet Foreign Ministry. One unconfirmed report by a former member of the Foreign Ministry

has stated that news gathered abroad by TASS is subject to censorship control by the Ministry, presumably in its Press Office, before publication. The Foreign Ministry is also required to approve, formally at least, TASS correspondents for assignment abroad, although actual control probably lies elsewhere. The interchangeability of jobs between the Foreign Ministry and TASS also suggests a close relationship, with the Ministry using TASS as a training institute (see Section III B).

Glavlit (Main Administration for Affairs of Literature and Publishing) is another agency which probably shares in the control of TASS. As the main government censorship agency with the right of "political, ideological, military and economic control" over all published material as well as the right to prohibit publication, Glavlit is authorized to station its representatives at all places of publication; the law makes specific reference to "telegraph agencies." It is not known whether, in the case of TASS, Glavlit avails itself of this right or of its right to appoint responsible editors of publications to act as its agents. At the very least, it seems probable that TASS materials, like those of the party press, are subject to Glavlit pre-publication censorship to prevent disclosure of military secrets.

D. Distortion of News

Since the Soviet dictatorship requires that all information contained in the press must conform to, and promote, the Party's ideology and political line, TASS also functions as a propaganda agency. This task is performed both by the selection of the news disseminated and by outright distortion.

In his article on TASS, Palgunov, the agency's present director, admitted that TASS's job was "not to disseminate information which by its content and nature is like a mere photographic process....but information, based upon Marxist-Leninist theory, which provides an analysis of events...." He continued:

"The force of our Press lies in the fact that it is directed by the Communist Party always and in everything.... Information must not simply illuminate

this or that fact or event, though there might be reason for such illumination; it must also pursue a definite end. Information must serve and help the solution of the fundamental tasks which face our Soviet society and our Soviet communism. Information must be didactic and instructive.
(Author's Italics)

In other words, information disseminated by TASS to the Soviet press must above all serve as Party propaganda.

The extent to which TASS complies with this requirement has, on occasion, led to criticism. In 1946, for example, Kultura e zhizn, organ of the Central Committee's Propaganda Administration, severely attacked TASS for what was described as "unsatisfactory domestic and foreign news reports." The journal complained that not only were TASS reports stereotyped and too greatly based on materials already published in the Moscow press but that they did not give a rounded picture of events abroad. As an example, it noted in regard to the 1945 Paris Peace Conference that "from TASS reviews it was hard to understand what really took place."

Below are some examples of the way TASS treats Soviet internal news.

1. Rapa va-Bulchadze Trial

The trial and execution in Georgia of eight senior officials as counter-revolutionary associates of Beria in November 1955 was never reported outside Georgia though the trial was conducted by the USSR Supreme Court and, more significantly, it gave the first hint that Stalin's pre-war purges were under review, three months before Khrushchev delivered his secret speech.

2. Khrushchev's Secret Speech

The Party censorship would not allow TASS to release Khrushchev's "de-Stalinization" speech at the 20th Party Congress in February, 1956, and it has never appeared in the Soviet Press.

3. Begirov Trial

The trial and execution in May 1956, of the former First Secretary of the Azerbaidzhan Communist Party as a traitor and accomplice of Beria was never reported by TASS for the Soviet central or republican Press. The only mention of what in any other country would have been a sensational event was made in the local Party paper of Azerbaidzhan, where the trial took place.

4. Poznan Riots and the Hungarian Uprising

The Soviet people have not been permitted to learn the true causes and nature of these two uprisings in the Soviet orbit. TASS said the Polish Riots on 28 June 1956 were "a hostile provocation committed by imperialist agents in Poznan." All subsequent reports continued this line.

The Hungarian revolt which began on 23 October 1956 had been in progress two days before TASS made any mention of it. While fighting against Soviet troops was at its height, TASS said the "anti-democratic adventure in Budapest had failed" and went on:

"Underground reactionary organizations attempted to start in Budapest a counter-revolutionary revolt against the people's regime. This enemy adventure had obviously been prepared for some time. The forces of foreign reaction had been systematically meeting anti-democratic elements for action against the lawful authority...."

Subsequently, the Soviet press always referred to the "Imperialist Fascist putsch in Hungary."

5. Speeches by Leading Figures

TASS texts of speeches by important figures--Soviet and foreign--have also been "doctored" on several occasions. On 6 November 1955 when

Kaganovich made the key-note speech on the 38th Anniversary of the October Revolution, there were discrepancies between the live version and the TASS report. In the part of the speech dealing with foreign affairs two passages, containing bellicose statements about the West, were inserted in the TASS version, while two passages on internal affairs uttered by Kaganovich were suppressed by TASS and Pravda. Referring to the growing requirements of the Soviet Union, Kaganovich's phrase "and we do not satisfy them fully" was replaced by "and economically we are still lagging behind the principal capitalist countries." Discussing the increase in cultivation of the virgin lands, Kaganovich said "and no matter how much talk there is about the difficulty of this work, the Party is successfully reclaiming these lands." This remark was cut out by TASS and Pravda, presumably because it showed Party policy on the virgin lands was meeting with opposition.

In September 1956 President Sukarno of Indonesia, during his visit to the USSR, made a speech at Tashkent which ended with these words: "I know that there are among you many Moslems for whom it is necessary to go to pray and for this reason I will detain you here no longer." This passage, though printed in Pravda (September 6) was omitted in the UZTAG /Telegraph Agency of Uzbekistan - a local branch of TASS/ version which appeared in Pravda Vostoka, the organ of the Communist Party of Uzbekistan. Uzbekistan is a republic in which the Soviet regime has persistently sought to destroy the Moslem faith. Sukarno's statement that belief in God was one of the five principles on which the Indonesian State was based was also omitted from the Uzbek paper.

Another example is the TASS treatment of a speech made by Khrushchev on 2 December 1955 during his visit to Burma. In the course of the speech, Khrushchev remarked, "The English did not exist as a country until William the Conqueror; your temples are twice as old as theirs...yet

they call you savages and barbarians." The TASS report of the speech, as printed in Pravda, attributed this remark to an anonymous "Burmese diplomat". Referring to the fact that Reuters had reported Khrushchev had said it (as indeed he had), Pravda declared that "bourgeois correspondents" had "ascribed to Comrade Khrushchev what he did not say and flagrantly distorted what was actually said." The flagrant TASS-Pravda falsification was made quite clear by the fact that other Communist papers, notably the Czech Rude Pravo on 4 December and the British Daily Worker on 3 December, had already published accounts of Khrushchev's speech identical with the Reuters report.

II. Structure

A. Administrative Organization

The central TASS office, employing approximately 1,800 people, is divided functionally into editorial, specialized, technical and auxiliary departments.

1. Editorial Departments

a. Foreign News Department (Redaktsiya Inostrannoy Informatsii TASS - INOTASS) processes all news received from TASS foreign correspondents and from foreign news agencies. News received in foreign languages is translated into Russian by the department's own staff of translators. The department is divided into a number of geographical sections, each of which handles news on a particular country or group of countries. There is also a foreign press reading section.

Personnel assigned to the department must have an adequate area knowledge and a working knowledge of the language of the country from which they are editing the news. They are divided on the basis of qualifications and experience into four grades: junior editors, editors, senior editors, and section heads and their deputies.

b. News For Abroad Department (Redaktsiya Informatsii dlya Zagranitsy - RIDZ), which has formed a part of INOTASS since November 1954, has the mission of transmitting Soviet domestic and foreign news reports to the foreign press. The personnel are chiefly translators since TASS news is transmitted abroad in English, French, German and Spanish as well as in Russian.

RIDZ has no domestic or foreign correspondents but obtains its foreign news from the INOTASS news report and its domestic news from correspondents attached to the Domestic News Department. RIDZ

does, however, have a local reportorial staff to cover central government offices and other Moscow news.

RIDZ transmits its news abroad by means of teletype, Morse code and Hellschreiber. Morse and Hellschreiber daily transmissions totalled 120 hours in 1954, 190 hours in 1955, and 240 hours in 1956. In June 1953 the following was the daily schedule of transmissions:

<u>Region</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Time</u>	
		<u>Hours</u>	<u>Minutes</u>
North America	English Morse	3	40
	Russian		
	(Romanized) Morse	2	
Latin America	Spanish Morse	3	
	English Morse	15	
	English		
	Hellschreiber	22	45
Europe	French or German		
	Hellschreiber	20	30
	Russian		
	Hellschreiber	22	10
Near East	French Morse	8	15
	French		
	Hellschreiber	7	15
Far East	English Morse	14	15
	English		
	Hellschreiber	2	45

In addition to the above, an irregular TASS service of 5 hours 30 minutes in Russian or English Morse was broadcast to Shanghai or Peiping. Also, the daily 18 hours 30 minutes in Russian Morse to the Soviet Far East was believed to include propaganda directives and other forms of instructions to Soviet and Chinese officials in Peiping.

c. Domestic News Department (Redaktsiya Soyuznoy Informatsii - RSI) gathers and edits domestic news, transmits it to the press, and supervises the domestic TASS correspondents within the RSFSR as well as the work of the various republic agencies. RSI is also charged with the training and professional improvement of correspondents and with the convening of conferences and conventions of correspondents.

The department is divided into a number of specialized news sections: party and government, industrial and transportation, farm, cultural, military, sports and youth. It also has a local reporter staff (numbering 25 in 1955) in Moscow and a network of part-time correspondents in large industrial plants.

RSI distributes its news by radio and other communications media and by a daily informational bulletin, Vestnik, which contains 100 to 120 pages--about 20,000 to 24,000 words--and 130 to 200 news items from all over the USSR.

d. Local Press Department (Redaktsiya Informatsii iya Respubliki Pechati - RIMP) edits for republic, kray, city and rayon newspapers news selected from the foreign and domestic news reports issued by INOTASS and RSI. RIMP is also charged with circulating the important lead items and editorials from Pravda and other central organs to the lower press. As of 1955, RIMP was servicing about 400 republic, kray and oblast newspapers and 4,100 rayon and city newspapers.

2. Specialized Departments

a. Photo Service (Fotozhurnal TASS) is the largest of the specialized departments, with a network of photographers in Moscow and in the major industrial, cultural and administrative centers of the USSR. According to Palgunov, the Service issues about 25,000 pictures a year and has a file of negatives covering 80,000 domestic subjects.

The Service operates abroad on an extensive basis, maintaining contacts with foreign picture agencies and sometimes sending its own photographers abroad to supply the Soviet press with pictures of life abroad. In the United States an organization known as Sovfoto (or the Am-Rus Literary and Music Agency) appears to act for Potochronika as a central distribution service for pictures on the Soviet Union for the entire Western Hemisphere. In Japan photos are distributed through the Japan-Soviet News Agency, established in 1954.

Potochronika was originally set up in the early 1930's as an independent organization called Sovuzfoto. In 1937 it was made a department of the International Book Trust (Mezhdunarodnaya Kniga, or Mekhknig). It received its present name in 1941 when it was placed under the jurisdiction of TASS.

b. Press Cliche Department, which was made a part of the Photo Service in 1954, supplies the non-Moscow press with finished plastic mats for pictures, articles, cartoons, etc. The service makes possible great economies since the mats are supplied at low cost (1.80 rubles each for a rayon newspaper) and since the client papers are thus relieved of the need of maintaining individual staffs of draftsmen, artists, cartoonists, engravers, etc. However, the service is also responsible for much of the monotonous similarity which is so striking in the non-Moscow Soviet press (see Section III A).

c. Press Bureau supplies the peripheral press with feature articles of an ideological nature or on economic, political, cultural and foreign affairs. The 800 to 1,000 articles supplied each year are written not only by Bureau personnel but also by outstanding leaders and experts in every field of Soviet life and society.

d. Radio Information is the fourth specialized department; no information is available as to its functions.

3. Technical Departments

According to Palgunov, the Communications Department includes 35 percent of the total central office personnel. Incoming and outgoing domestic and foreign news is handled by radiotelegraph, radio, telephone, radio-teletype, cable telephone, etc. TASS has its own private teleprinter facilities within the Soviet Union and its own radio center with at least 24 shortwave transmitters, of which 17 are devoted to broadcasts abroad and 7 to news summaries for the domestic press.

At least five days a week TASS broadcasts a total of 7 hours 40 minutes of news to the provincial, republic and regional press and between 2 hours and 3 hours 45 minutes to the city and district press (the longer service occurs only two or three times a week). In addition, there is an irregular 2-hour transmission from Khabarovsk to publications in Farana, Siberia. As of 1941, it was reported that only 270 out of some 3,000 papers received their news by telegraph.

On a daily basis, TASS transmits to its client newspapers by all media a total of 217,000 to 225,000 words. The department, however, actually daily transmits 996,000 words and receives 677,000 words in all directions and by all means.

By special agreement between the Ministry of Communications and TASS, government communications have priority over information sent by TASS and the republic agencies regardless of how transmitted. TASS transmissions containing decrees and governmental edicts, however, have equal priority with governmental communications.

There are two other technical services: Large and Small Circulation Departments; no information is available on their functions.

4. Auxiliary Departments

In his article on TASS, Palgunov refers, without detailing their specific functions, to seven auxiliary departments, of which he names five: planning

and finance, administration, foreign reference, domestic reference, and auditing. No other information is available on any of the auxiliary departments.

B. Personnel

According to the 1935 decree TASS is headed by a director (now N. G. Palgunov), who is responsible for all activity, and two assistant directors (believed now to be K. Shiryakov and V. Seliverstov), appointed officially by the Council of Ministers but probably actually selected by Agitprop. Heads of the various republic telegraph agencies are appointed by their respective governments in consultation with the TASS director.

TASS has responsibility for training the cadres of "nomenclature workers" for the entire system of telegraphic agencies and also assists the republic agencies in training their correspondents. The Soviet Union has, in general, placed great stress on attracting competent writers and ideologists into journalism and has encouraged each level of the press to give on-the-job training; TASS is expected to do its share in this process. As in most lines of government work, TASS employees are believed to be subjected early in their careers to pressure to join the Party.

TASS correspondents and employees sent abroad are nominated by a 5-man sub-committee attached to the Party Presidium, which, in fact, must approve the appointment abroad of any Soviet citizen. The committee is headed by a Presidium member, with other members representing the Intelligence Center and the Ministries of State Security (MVD), Foreign Affairs, and Foreign Trade. According to the International Press Institute, the MVD and Intelligence Center invariably have the deciding voice in the choice of candidates.

Because of this appointment procedure, TASS correspondents sent abroad appear to be chosen chiefly on the basis of political reliability (and, at times, intelligence usefulness), with journalistic qualifications being quite secondary. In many cases, in fact, they have had no journalistic experience whatever. The first TASS correspondent sent to Egypt, for example, was Dr. Mikhail

Kerostovtsev, a renowned Egyptologist, who boasted of the fact that he had never before had anything to do with the press. Only two of the Russians appointed to the TASS London office between 1942 and 1950 had any previous experience; of four assigned there in 1945 one had formerly been a village schoolteacher, another a railway engineer, a third a barely literate demobilized ex-farm laborer, and the fourth an official of the Ministry of State Security.

Foreign nationals employed by TASS offices abroad are expected to be members of the Communist Parties of their respective countries, although not always open members, and well-qualified journalists. In the United States, for example, Americans employed by TASS have, since 1941, been required technically to resign from the Party. Foreign national employees are not expected to know Russian and reportedly are actively discouraged from learning it.

TASS personnel both in Moscow and abroad include a strong diplomatic element. TASS's wartime director, for example, was Constantine Gumenyuk, who had just previously served as Ambassador to the UK. His successor, Palgunov, had been head of the Foreign Ministry's Press Office; and one of his assistants there later became Ambassador to China. Yakov Lemakin, once in the American Division of TASS in Moscow and later head of the TASS New York office, subsequently (1946) became Soviet Consul General in the US.

Other examples can also be cited. F. Orekhov, an assistant to Palgunov in TASS, was made Counselor of the Soviet Embassy in Washington. T. S. Chernyshev, after a tour as Ambassador to Sweden, served as assistant director of TASS and then as UN Undersecretary. Moreover, many of the persons working in the UN Secretariat under the Soviet quota were originally listed as TASS correspondents.

This interchangeability of jobs suggests that a TASS job is regarded as an important assignment in the foreign field, providing useful training for a diplomatic career.

III. Operations

A. Internal Operations

1. Collection Network

According to the Palgimov article, TASS was receiving at the time the article was written a daily news file of from 677,000 to 700,000 words from its combined domestic and foreign services. A UNESCO study published in 1953 estimated that the TASS central office received only about 260,000 words a week from all of its Soviet centers, which suggests that the overwhelming proportion of incoming TASS reports comes from abroad.

To collect its domestic news TASS relies on a staff of more than 800 correspondents within the Soviet Union. As of 1955, these included 66 correspondents stationed in every oblast center and autonomous republic in the RSFSR, correspondents of the TASS bureaus maintained in Leningrad, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok, Irkutsk, Novosibirsk and Tashkent, and correspondents of the 15 republic telegraph agencies. TASS also receives reports from the special correspondents which the major Moscow newspapers have in large factories, collective farms and other enterprises.

Within the RSFSR the network of bureaus and correspondents is directly subordinate to the central TASS office. In the other union republics, the networks of correspondents are integrated administratively into the respective republic agencies. TASS appoints these correspondents from lists of applicants submitted by the respective agencies. In case of necessity TASS can and does send special correspondents to posts anywhere in the USSR.

2. Republic Telegraph Agencies

The 15 republic telegraph agencies, which were created as a gesture towards the theoretically federal structure of the USSR, are in practice no more than branch offices of TASS. Their directors

are appointed by the respective republic governments on the recommendation of the TASS director. Since TASS doubles as the national agency for the RSFSR, it has a plenipotentiary attached to the RSFSR Government, appointed by the TASS director subject to the approval of the RSFSR Government.

TASS is, by law, directly responsible for the operations of these agencies and gives them specific assignments for the gathering and dissemination of news, all of which must be implemented. Each of them receives its news on the outside world exclusively from TASS and cannot alter TASS reports in any way. Financial relationships are regulated by contract.

The following are the 15 separate national agencies:

Ratsa (Ukraine)	Belta (Belorussia)
Uztag (Uzbekistan)	Kaztag (Kazakhstan)
Gruztag (Georgia)	Aztag (Azerbaijan)
El'ta (Lithuania)	Moldtag (Moldavia)
Leta (Latvia)	Kirtag (Kirgizia)
Tadzhikta (Tadzhikistan)	Armentag (Armenia)
Karel-Fintag (Karelia)	Ets (Estonia)
Turkmentag (Turkmenistan)	

3. Dissemination Services

A large percentage of TASS disseminations are drawn from the Moscow press, from which TASS daily sends out selections. The leading article of the Party organ Pravda is disseminated by all media to the entire peripheral press. The leading editorial in Komsomol'skaya Pravda is sent to all youth organs and that in Krasnaya Zvezda to all military journals. In addition, a daily press review containing summaries of the contents of these three papers as well as of Izvestia and Trud are sent to the press of the entire USSR, except that papers in Siberia and the Far East get only abbreviated versions of the most important articles.

In addition to the central press material, TASS disseminates a daily bulletin on internal and foreign affairs and a weekly survey of international affairs,

which local papers are obliged to use. At intervals it also issues summaries of the contents of some of the major periodicals, for example, New Times. (Other materials provided by the Photo Service, Press Cliche, Press Bureau, etc., have been discussed in Section II A of this report.)

TASS is believed to divide its clients into five classes based on periodicity and circulation, with each class getting a different type of service suited to its requirements. Thus, weeklies, for example, get a news summary of 125 to 150 lines.

TASS is believed to issue for high Party officials only a daily secret news summary, Red TASS, consisting of digests of foreign press comment, diplomatic cables, and selected telegrams from TASS correspondents abroad. Its name derives from the color of the paper on which it is printed. A second secret summary printed on green paper for less important officials has also been reported.

4. Press Uniformity

Because all of the Soviet Union's approximately 7,163 newspapers and magazines must use TASS reports and because of the widespread use of the services provided by the Press Cliche Department, the non-Moscow press evidences a striking similarity, both in content and appearance. The Party Journal Communist (No. 6, 1955, p. 101), in a survey of local papers published on the same day, complained that "if it were not for the headings and names of different rayons, enterprises and collective farms, any of these papers could be changed over one for the other and neither the readers nor the editorial staffs would notice it."

During a call on TASS director Falgunov in Moscow in 1955, William Benton, former US Senator and publisher of Encyclopedia Britannica, called the director's attention to copies of the previous day's papers from all over the country, each of which bore the identical headline in the identical type, size and page position and the same picture of the same event in the same size and position. The embarrassed Falgunov could only venture the lame excuse that it must have been a coincidence.

While the uniformity of the peripheral press reflects in part a lack of initiative by individual editors and a fear of violating the Party line, it also reflects the extent of TASS's influence on the content and form of the entire Soviet peripheral press.

5. Finances

TASS and the republic agencies are required by the 1935 decree to operate on a self-sustaining basis. Revenue comes from fees paid for their news and services by client newspapers. Rates are set by special decrees of the Council of Ministers; some are as low as 4 rubles 60 kopeks weekly (\$1.00 at official rate, 25¢ actually) for papers coming out only once or twice a week. However, since much of TASS's activity includes intelligence collection and propaganda dissemination, it would seem likely that it receives an unreported subsidy from the government.

Although TASS does not report any details of its budget, a guess as to its size can be made. Palgunov told Benton that the AP budget was bigger than his while that of the Agence France-Presse (AFP) was 2.5 times less. In 1951 AP expenditures totalled \$24,693,645; while in 1952 the AFP budget was approximately \$7,400,000. Palgunov's remarks, coupled with these figures, would suggest that the TASS budget is probably in the vicinity of \$18,000,000.

By virtue of the 1935 decree, information telegrams of TASS, the republic agencies and their correspondents are sent at identical preferential rates established by the Council of Ministers.

B. Foreign Operations

1. Journalistic Activities

The TASS network of foreign correspondents functions to a large extent as an adjunct of the Soviet Foreign Ministry. This is reflected not only in the interchangeability of personnel (see Section II B above), but also in the fact that TASS correspondents

abroad live and operate in close contact with Soviet diplomatic personnel. TASS men and Soviet diplomats are often billeted in the same building, while TASS offices are usually located on mission premises or adjacent to them. In many instances TASS makes use of available diplomatic facilities such as the pouch and telecommunications. As a rule TASS correspondents carry Soviet "service" passports and, on occasion, diplomatic passports.

Unlike the average Western journalist, the TASS correspondent does not as a rule get out and "dig" for a story. For the most part, TASS relies on a careful scrutiny of local press and publications, coupled with attendance at press conferences, political and parliamentary meetings, etc. Where reporting to Moscow is expected to be published, it apparently is heavily edited to make it palatable. In contrast, considerable factual material--parliamentary debates, technical stories, trade statistics, etc.--is sent verbatim, suggesting that it is probably for information rather than publication.

In addition to the news sources mentioned above, TASS appears also to rely quite heavily on Western news agencies, to which it subscribes. The TASS charter specifically gives it the right to sign contracts with foreign news agencies for the exchange of news, and it has used this right extensively. Exchange agreements are believed to exist (or to have existed) with the following agencies:

<u>Country</u>	<u>News Agency</u>
Afghanistan	Baidtar
Albania	Agence Telegraphique Albanaise
Austria	Austria Presse Agentur
Bulgaria	Bulgaraki Telegrafitsheka Agentzia
Communist China	Hsin Hua (New China) News Agency
Czechoslovakia	Cesko Tiskova Kancelar

<u>Country</u>	<u>News Agency</u>
East Germany	Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichtendienst
Egypt	Middle East News Agency
Finland	Suomen Tietotoimisto-Finska Notisbyran
France	Agence France-Presse
Hungary	Magyar Távíráti Iroda
Indonesia	Kantor Berita Antara
Iran	Para
Italy	Agenzia Nazionale Stampa Associata
Japan	Kyodo News Service
Netherlands	Algemeen Nederlandsch Persbureau
North Korea	Chung-Yang Tongshin
Norway	Norsk Telegrambyrå
Poland	Polska Agencja Prasowa
Rumania	Agentie de Informatii Telegrafice
United Kingdom	Reuters
United States	Associated Press United Press

TASS appears to use the Free World agencies for information purposes only and very rarely reproduces extracts in its own service.

The TASS office in Moscow receives an average of 1,677,000 words daily from its foreign correspondents, according to a statement by William Benton. The US offices, according to testimony by a TASS employee before a Senate committee in 1955, has an estimated daily quota of 5,000 to 6,000 words, with a total monthly transmission of about 175,000 words, through normal commercial channels.

To provide this daily flow of words from abroad, TASS maintains approximately 200 correspondents in various cities throughout the world. In 1955, according to Palgunov, TASS offices or individual correspondents were located in the following cities (an asterisk indicates a known full-fledged bureau):

<u>Area</u>	<u>Cities</u>
Western Hemisphere	New York,* Washington,* (subordinate to New York), Ottawa, Buenos Aires, Montevideo
Free Europe	London,* Paris,* Vienna,* Berne, Rome, Brussels, The Hague, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Oslo, Helsinki, Athens, Belgrade
Middle East	Istanbul, Ankara, Beirut, Tel Aviv, Cairo, Karachi, New Delhi, Teheran
Southeast Asia	Djakarta, Bangkok
Communist Bloc	Peking,* Shanghai, East Berlin,* Tirana, Sofia, Prague, Budapest, Warsaw, Bucharest, Ulan-Bator, Pyongyang

Since the Paigunov article was written, TASS also has established offices in Pretoria, Damascus (September 1956), Addis Ababa (1957) and Phnom Penh (1957). TASS offices, either as recognized establishments or as part of the local embassy, are believed to exist also in Mexico, West Germany, Libya, New Zealand, Burma, Japan, Ceylon, Iceland and Ghana.

Despite the large amount of wordage regularly transmitted abroad by RIDZ, TASS foreign operations are primarily concerned with collection. Most of the wordage would appear to be for the edification of the TASS staff abroad and the local Soviet diplomatic missions. Although the overseas offices in many cases do circulate daily bulletins based on these RIDZ transmissions, actual distribution activity varies widely.

In the United States, the TASS offices distribute very little. The same is true of the Latin American offices, although these do service a few Communist and left-wing newspapers. The situation in Europe is much the same. In Paris and Helsinki, some TASS reports are

circulated, although by the local Sovinform offices rather than by TASS itself. In Rome, ANSA, by agreement with TASS, picks up Russian Hellischreiber broadcasts and delivers the tapes to the TASS office, which then forwards them to the Communist organ Unita.

In contrast, TASS engages in considerable distribution activity in the Middle East. The TASS offices in Beirut and Cairo, for example, distribute free to a large number of newspapers and individuals a Soviet News Bulletin in French and Arabic, which also reaches recipients in Syria. In India TASS's News and Views from the Soviet Union is published daily in English, twice weekly in Hindi, Urdu, Bengali, Telugu, Marathi and Gujarati, and once weekly in Punjabi. TASS also issues Soviet Land in English, Hindi, Telugu and Bengali, and on occasion also distributes special pamphlets.

In Japan (as of 1956) TASS news was received through Shanghai by the Soviet News Agency, an indigenous front organization, which distributed it. The agency also distributes photographs and other features which are sent to Japan once a month by airmail. The present situation is uncertain, since TASS is reported to have re-established a Tokyo office following the resumption of Japanese-Soviet diplomatic relations.

A special situation obtains in the Soviet Union's European satellites. In each a national agency exists to diffuse Party directives and government decrees to the provincial press and to relay provincial news to the capital. For the transmission of this information to Moscow and the diffusion of Soviet material in the satellites, TASS is the channel.

As far as is known, actual control of the satellite national agencies is exercised through the local Communist Party and Soviet mission, with TASS serving merely as a transmission channel. However, in 1950 TASS reportedly took the lead in organizing the national agencies of Albania, Bulgaria, Communist China, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, North Korea, Poland and Rumania into a coordinating group, which has linked them very closely together.

The influence of TASS on the satellites is best reflected in the foreign news columns of the satellite papers. In 1952, for example, TASS reports constituted 46 percent in Czech papers, 75 percent in Rumanian papers, and 64.5 percent in Bulgarian papers.

2. Subversive Activities

In its 1954 report on TASS, the International Press Institute noted that only a fraction of the information sent to Moscow by TASS foreign correspondents is ever printed in the Soviet press and concluded that "the greater part of this information can be regarded as military, political and economic intelligence intended for functional use by the appropriate Soviet ministries and other governmental departments."

Not only are TASS reports of an intelligence character but TASS correspondents are frequently active members of one or another Soviet intelligence agency rather than bona fide journalists. In fact one postwar survey of TASS correspondents, conducted on a world-wide basis, revealed that at least 25 percent of such correspondents had a background of active intelligence training.

The true figure is probably much higher. Lt. Col. Yuri Rastvorov, who defected while serving in Tokyo as a Soviet military intelligence officer under the guise of an Embassy Second Secretary, has stated that at least 85 to 90 percent of all TASS personnel abroad are agents either of Soviet military intelligence (GRU), or political intelligence (MVD). Ismail Ege (Ismail Guseynovich Almedov), another former GRU officer who defected, estimated the percentage from 80 to 85. Vladimir Petrov, who defected while serving as a Soviet Embassy Secretary in Australia, told a Royal Commission that all TASS correspondents abroad act as MVD agents.

While the exact percentage may be unknown, there is reason to believe it is high. Many examples can be cited where TASS employment has served to mark the real activity of a Soviet agent. In one country,

at the opening of World War II, for example, GRU is known to have had a spy network of five persons, of whom two operated as TASS representatives. At the same time and the same place the MVD had a 6-man network, of whom one was the director of the TASS office and another a TASS correspondent.

According to revelations made by him in later years, Ege (Aldmedov), then Chief of the GRU's Fourth Section, was sent to Germany in May 1941 under the name of Georgi Nikolayev in the guise of a TASS correspondent. Ege also identified a number of TASS correspondents who had served in Berlin, Istanbul, Ankara and Vichy before 3 June 1943 (the date of his defection), whom he had known personally to be intelligence agents.

The use of TASS cover during the war years was widespread. In the postwar years, TASS cover has continued to be used, although probably less extensively than during the war. In most non-Communist countries there is a close liaison between TASS personnel and indigenous Communist elements; and in some countries, TASS is believed to play the role of intermediary and paymaster in its relations with local Communists.

Rastvorov, for example, has revealed that the TASS office in postwar Japan was heavily staffed with intelligence agents. An early TASS representative there, Konstantin Samoliov, was identified by Rastvorov as a GRU staff colonel whose real name was Sonini. Samoliov's successor, Yakov Kisilev, was also an intelligence agent, as was Evgeniy Egorov, who succeeded Kisilev in March 1949. According to Rastvorov, Egorov was actually a captain in the GRU.

The Report of the Royal Commission on Espionage, issued on 22 August 1951 and based on disclosures by Vladimir Petrov, indicated that during the period 1949-1952 three successive TASS representatives in Australia--Mosov, Pakhomov and Antonov--were all MVD personnel.

Since the end of World War II, there have been three notorious cases concerning TASS representatives involved in espionage:

a. The Gouzenko Case

This case arose from disclosures made to Canadian authorities by Igor Gouzenko, a cipher clerk employed in the Soviet Military Attache's office in Ottawa, about espionage activities organized by the Soviet Embassy staff. Gouzenko named, among others, Nikolai Zhevelinov, who served as a TASS correspondent in Canada from 1942 to 1945. According to Gouzenko, Zhevelinov was a member of the spy ring and, under the code name of "Martin," had been charged with the direction and supervision of undercover agents.

Another member of the spy ring identified by Gouzenko was Sergei Kuzryavtsev, the Embassy First Secretary. Testifying before a US Senate committee in February 1956, Ismail Ege identified Kuzryavtsev as a former TASS representative in Berlin and Turkey where, according to Ege, he had actually served as an MVD agent.

b. The Anisimov Case

In 1951 and 1952, Viktor Anisimov, head of the TASS office in Stockholm was involved in two espionage cases in which a number of Swedes were convicted of espionage on behalf of the USSR.

The first of these cases concerned Ernst Hilding Andersson, a Swedish Navy petty officer, who was convicted of espionage on 14 November 1951. It was publicly disclosed that Andersson, a Communist since 1929, had been contacted in 1946 first by Soviet diplomats and later by Anisimov, to supply information on the Swedish Navy, coast defense installations, secret water lanes, etc.

Anisimov had left Sweden before Andersson's arrest, and the Swedish Government took no action against TASS. On 21 September 1951,

however, it did demand the recall of Anisimov's successor as contact man, Nikolai Orlov, a Soviet Embassy clerk.

Anisimov and Orlov were also involved in the second affair, namely, the case of Fritiof Enbom, a Communist journalist arrested and convicted, along with six others, in 1952. The Swedish democratic press was outspoken in its denunciation of Anisimov and of TASS in general. As an example can be cited the semi-official Social Democratic organ, Morgen-Tidningen, which declared in its issue of 31 October 1951:

"We know, from the Russian Press and Radio, that 'news' about Sweden dispatched by TASS is highly distorted and false. 'News' not intended for publication, i.e. spy reports, however, is both correct and detailed, judging from Andersson's confessions. TASS correspondents' real task thus does not appear to be the operation of a news service in the accepted sense, but to conduct propaganda against the countries where they are stationed to spy. There are no guarantees that Anisimov's successors will differ from their predecessors in that respect."

c. The Pissarev Case

On 23 December 1952, L. K. Pissarev, chief TASS representative at The Hague, was arrested by Dutch police while he was meeting a Dutch contact, a minor ministry official, whom Pissarev had requested to procure secret information for him. Unfortunately for Pissarev, his Dutch contact, being a loyal citizen and not a Communist traitor, had reported Pissarev's activity to the police. In February 1953, Pissarev was deported without being brought to trial, the Dutch authorities having decided to be lenient inasmuch as the police had ended his illegal activities at the outset.

It must be kept in mind that these three cases are only those which have become public. In view of the widespread use of TASS cover by the Soviet intelligence organizations, other illegal activity by TASS representatives probably exists but has gone undetected. As Petrov told the Royal Commission in Australia, even if TASS representatives are not permanently employed by the MVD, they are invariably required to assist in its work.